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# HOW TO BECOME A NOTARY PUBLIC

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*Published by*  
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# HOW TO BECOME A NOTARY PUBLIC



**WHAT IS A NOTARY PUBLIC?** • A notary public is an appointment made by the governor of the Commonwealth, one of the oldest public service appointments mentioned in the Massachusetts Constitution.

**WHAT ARE THE POWERS AND DUTIES OF A NOTARY PUBLIC?** • Primarily, notary public is empowered to act as an official objective witness to the fact that a person is who he or she claims to be, and that the person, in the presence of the notary, has voluntarily signed a document on a given date. Also, a notary may administer oaths to confirm a person's identification when such is required and take acknowledgments of deeds and other instruments such as wills, personal papers, corporation papers, etc. A notary is not authorized to give legal advice or to prepare legal documents on the behalf of others.

**WHO MAY BECOME A NOTARY PUBLIC?** • A person is eligible for appointment as a notary public in Massachusetts, providing that the person is at least eighteen years of age at the time of his or her appointment.

**WHO APPOINTS NOTARIES?** • The governor, with the advice and consent of the Executive Council, appoints notaries public. After the appointment has been made and approved, a person will be notified of his or her appointment by the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

**WHAT STEPS ARE NECESSARY TO BECOME A NOTARY? • STEP ONE:** An application form must be requested from:

Executive Council  
State House, Room 184  
Boston, MA 02133  
(617) 727-2795

When requesting an application form by mail, the applicant's full name, home address and profession (occupation) must be included.

**STEP TWO:** In completing the application, the applicant must list the reasons for wanting to become a notary public. Also, the application must be signed by four persons, one of whom must be a member of the Massachusetts Bar (attorney).

**STEP THREE:** The completed application form must be sent to the Executive Council in order that the applicant's name may be submitted to the governor for appointment, with the advice and consent of the council. The Executive Council and the Public Records Division, within the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, notify applicants when they are appointed. The Public Records Division also informs the applicants of the qualifying procedures. Usually the entire process, from submission of the application to appointment and notification, takes about four weeks.

**STEP FOUR:** After an applicant receives the letter of appointment, he or she may obtain the official notary commission from the secretary of state by making payment of a fee of \$25 and taking the required oaths of office. An individual appointed as a notary public may *not* act in that capacity until the fee has been paid and the oaths taken. The law requires an appointee to take the oaths within three months from the date of appointment. The letter should be brought to:

Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Public Records Division  
One Ashburton Place, Room 1719  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 727-2832

Two Commissioners to Qualify Public Officers will administer the oaths and issue the commission certificate, together with a wallet identification card showing the date that the commission expires.

**WHAT OTHER INFORMATION SHOULD AN APPLICANT KNOW?** • The Public Records Division is open Monday through Friday, 8:45 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. No appointment is necessary. Payment of the \$25 fee can be made either by cash, check or money order (payable to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts).

If an appointee is unable to come to Boston, he or she may arrange to take the oaths elsewhere. The oath-taking procedure, however, must still be completed within three months from the appointment date.

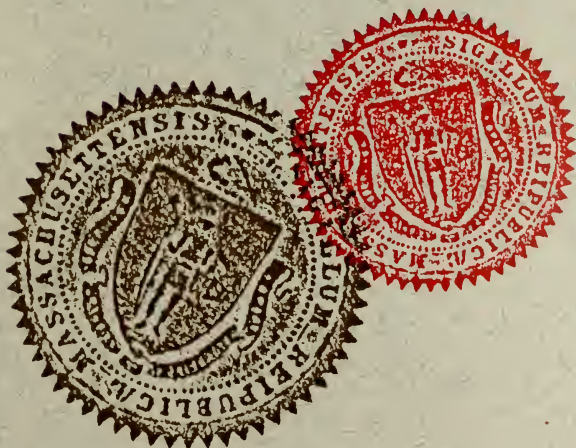
A coupon is included with the letter of appointment to accommodate those who may not be able to take the oaths in Boston. This coupon, stating the county where the oaths will be taken, together with a check or money order for the \$25 fee (made payable to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts) should be sent to the Public Records Division at the above address.

Upon receipt of the fee payment in Boston, the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Public Records Division will mail the commission certificate along with a list of Commissioners to Qualify Public Officers located in the county designated on the coupon. It is the responsibility of the individual to arrange for *two* of these commissioners listed to qualify him or her for office. One commissioner must administer the oaths and the other must witness the oath-taking. Both commissioners will sign the commission certificate and inform the Public Records Division in writing that the appointee appeared before them and took the oaths of office.



**HOW LONG IS THE TERM OF NOTARY PUBLIC?** • Notaries are appointed for a term of seven years, commencing on the date of their appointment. Massachusetts law prohibits the individual from continuing to act as a notary public after his or her current commission has expired. The expiration date of the commission is shown on the wallet identification card.

**IS A NOTARIAL SEAL NECESSARY?** • Massachusetts law does not specifically require that a notary use a seal when notarizing a document. However, it is strongly suggested that notaries use a seal since many other states and foreign countries require that a seal be affixed to a document. Seals may be purchased from stationers or tool-and-die makers. The Commonwealth does not offer notarial seals for sale.





**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**



**William Francis Galvin**

Secretary of the Commonwealth

Citizen Information Service

One Ashburton Place, Room 1611

Boston, Massachusetts 02108

Telephone: (617) 727-7030 (TDD also)

Toll-free: 1-800-392-6090 (in Mass. only)

Fax: (617) 742-4528

Website: [www.state.ma.us/sec/cis](http://www.state.ma.us/sec/cis)

or

Public Records Division

One Ashburton Place, Room 1719

Boston, Massachusetts 02108

Telephone: (617) 727-2832

Fax: (617) 727-5914

Website: [www.state.ma.us/sec/pre](http://www.state.ma.us/sec/pre)

